

## Archetypal Approach Spins around C.S.Lewis's the Chronicles of Narnia

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### Abstract

As archetypes are recurrent patterns in literature, they shine exuberantly in the genre of high fantasy, which derives much of its power from the archetypal models it incorporates with the subject matter; and *The Chronicles of Narnia* series is of no exception in this regard. They are finely embedded with the archetypal images such as light and darkness, sibling rivalry, tyrannical bullies, quest motif and character types. Albeit, the series has hooked up with various archetypal characteristics such as the theme of virtue conquers vice, it is the archetypal patterns in characters which have left a sturdy imprint to execute the thematic design of good versus evil in the entire plot structure. The intrinsic study of the series illustrates the infinite variety of experience of the dominant characters; wherein it reveals certain archetypal traits. Hence, the present paper explores on the variety of Archetypes in C.S.Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

**Key Words:** Archetypes, Types of Archetypes, Child archetypes

As Children's literature has provided with numerous archetypes, the eminence of series lies more on archetypal figures and images which it shares with other texts in the huge gamut of stories ranging from oral roots of tales to the latest fantasy narratives. When archetypal pattern flashes in one story, suddenly the reading mind may get connected into the same pattern in other literary work of art. Recounting this literary experience, the foremost archetypal critic Northrop Frye aptly puts in *The Educated Imagination*:

All themes and characters and stories that you encounter in literature belong to one big interlocking family... You keep associating your literary experiences together: you're always being reminded of some other story you read or movie you saw or character that impressed you. (48-49)

While the protagonists in the entire series are striving hard to attain their goals, they strongly share the archetypal patterns in the characterisation of fantasy stories. As Davies declares in *Scepticism and hope in twentieth century fantasy literature*, they "... are often strongly drawn and almost archetypal. The presentation of such characters in the hands of a good writer is sophisticated and the reader's desire for more adventures takes him or her on a journey through maturation." (149). Accordingly, through their archetypal portrayals, C.S.Lewis has dexterously interlaced their web of imparting ethical values to the reading young minds.

Exploring the archetypes in the characters is the best way of relating the narrative in the process of individuation in both the series. Peter J.Schakel rightly avers in *Reading with the Heart: The Way into Narnia*:

Answering the question „How should *The Chronicles of Narnia* be read?“ involves coming to grips with the term „archetype“... Writers in all ages have used the hero, the benevolent king, and the wise older guide as good characters, while the villain, the tyrant, and the witch appear again and again as the corresponding evil figure. (6-7)

True to this remark, both the series have a long array of archetypal characters such as king, old wise man, witch, tyrant and patterns in child protagonists. These archetypal traits certainly reveal the strong affinity between them and Carl Jung, who had formulated those figures in his theories. It is evident that Children's literature, when it has components of fantasy, easily connects with his suppositions. His presumption garnered special acclaim in this literary territory since it assumes an original wholeness in this genre.

In *Introduction to the Essence of Mythology*, Jung provides the detailed implications of the archetypes for literary study. To him, the archetypes are the major inhabitants of the unconscious for which he employs various terms such as „nodal points“, „motifs“, „primordial

images" and „patterns of behaviour". He argues that the archetypes emerge as mental images in order to protect and deliver the psyche from danger. This coincides with the stories for children where the archetypal figures are used to address mainly the primitive psyche of the child. They abet in the process of individual formation, by telling about the protection and perils of the soul, which initiates the reading mind into psychic reality. To put it in a nutshell, as Eduard Hugo Strauch's in *Beyond Literary Theory: Literature as a search for the meaning of Human Destiny* pertinently states:

The archetypes in mythology, religion and poetry actually exhibit a creative tendency to synthesize experience, integrate personality, and synchronize energies with spiritual goals. The theme of infant in myth and literature displays man's inherent intuition to create a superior self which can come to terms with both good and evil. (142)

Furthermore, Jung's stance claims that the archetypes are not inherited by individual human beings. Rather it is passed on in the human species as a predilection to fashion meaningful myths and symbols from common experience of each person's life.

Among an assortment of Jung's archetypes, wise old man, ruler, witch and a variety of child archetypes have gained particular prominence in both the series. They have taken a wide range of connotations with respect to Jung's theory of anima, animus, beast and shadow traits of an individual. The most important archetype for Jung is the self, central to the development of individuation, which is his main contribution to analytic psychology. It concerns with the way the individual establishes himself or herself in the world among the selection of choices. Accordingly, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, the implicit approach towards the process of character formation can be examined through the lens of Jung's archetypal patterns in the chief characters.

Among various archetypal figures in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, child characters drive much attention for the execution of instilling values to the reading young minds. As Jung suggests, the function of these child archetype is to correct the peculiarities and extravagances of the conscience of an individual. Emergence of such child archetype in myth, folklore or literature aids directly or indirectly in the synthesis of the conscious and unconscious elements of the reader's personality. As Jung states in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*:

Despite the constraints of one's personal or ethic consciousness, an archetype thrusts itself into one's cognizance. Acknowledgement of its presence becomes a means of maturation and self-transformation from a limited to a larger self and from an inferior to a superior awareness. (143)

Therefore, the child archetype in both the series assists in the progression of individuation of the reading audiences.

Among the wide multiplicity of child archetype such as Orphan, Wounded, Magical or Innocent, Nature, Divine and Eternal Boy or Girl, in both the series, the magical or innocent, nature and divine child finds a laudable position. The magical child represents the part of both enchanted and enchanting to others. This type refers to the delightful qualities of children, and also embodies the virtues of wisdom and courage in the face of difficult circumstances. This type of archetype can be traced in the character of Little Prince in Antoine de Saint's *The Little prince*, Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and Tiny Tim in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. As Anne in *Anne Frank*, where she has written her diary in spite of all the horror surrounding her family while hiding from Nazis in an attic in Amsterdam; this character pattern, even in crisis, has provoke people to seek out the wondrous side of life. They are gifted with the power of imagination and the belief that everything is possible. Embracing these traits, the child characters in the Narnia series aptly displays their amazing ability even in adverse circumstances.

Several circumstances can be traced in *The Magician's Nephew*, in which Digory and Polly faced the critical moment when they unexpectedly entered into the magical land of Narnia. In *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe*, the Pevensie children deftly handled the adverse conditions of the evil designs of White witch. In *Horse and the Boy*, Shasta has displayed a fine balance in his mission of searching his real identity. Thus, these child characters in both the series precisely gratifies to the archetypal model of magical child.

Another striking archetypal pattern of divine child is closely related to the innocent and magical child, with a difference of its redemptive mission. The divine child is associated with virtuousness, purity and salvation, god-like qualities that suggest that the child enjoys a special union with the divine itself. The finest example is Shasta's divine experience in *The Horse and His Boy*, when he was lost in the fog and separated from the King's procession. After continuing blindly for a while, he realised that he has been joined in the darkness by a mysterious company, who later turned to be the divine presence, which has led him for greater purposes. That divine companion himself encapsulates all events in *The Horse and His Boy*:

I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the tombs. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach king Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at night, to receive you. (198)

When the association of divinity occurs in *The Horse and His Boy*, the other aspects like righteousness, purity and redemption of this archetype embedded in the child characters such as Peter, Susan, Edmund, Lucy, Eustace Scrubb and Jill Pole. Certainly, the four

Pevensie children are differentiated from one another. Lucy is gentle, kind, forgiving, and perceptive; Peter is bold and decisive; Edmund seems to be suspicious, jealous, false and greedy; Susan is cautious and mature. With these individual traits, they had tough trail with the White witch, although they had charming moments with the fauns or the beavers.

As these children transported to the magical realm through the wardrobe, they initially strive to orient themselves to the Narnians. They are deeply divided upon the views of the role of humankind in the grand scheme of things, a motif encrypted all about the wonderland. However, soon they all begin to realize that the abilities to love, think and speak honestly are tantamount with good and healthy survival on earth, as they also strike the characteristic of the true spirit of Narnia, which is firmly asserted by Aslan in *The Magician's Nephew*, "... Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters." (139)

In the entire series, children embroiled in the fine fabric of Narnia, where they represent the innocent and good-natured traits as in the characters of Peter, Lucy and Susan. Even though the children who are wicked, malicious and teasing others are exonerated from their flaws in the fictional realm of Narnia. The finest exemplar is Eustace Scrubb in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, who transformed from the depraved mind and cowardice into a humble and brave enough to lead an ethically good life.

In Narnia, Peter is also the most courageous, though he is the meekest of children in ordinary world. As Timmerman suggests in *Other Worlds*, "Meekness, however, should never be mistaken for servility or cowardice – rather it is the recognition of an authority in one's life and the order that seems from this authority." (43). He has the respect for even the lowest of creatures in Narnia since he sees as creatures of Aslan. So, through him, Lewis resurrects the code of chivalry as a standard for behaviour.

Child Nature archetype inspires deep, intimate bonding with natural forces and has a particular affinity for friendships with animals. Nature children can develop advanced skills of communicating with animals, and in stories, reflecting this archetype, an animal often comes to the rescue of its child companion. It displays a life pattern of relating to animals in an intimate and caring way. For instance, in *Tarzan of the Apes* by Edgar Rice Burroughs and in *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, the chief child character had a sturdy affinity with the animals. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the central child figures certainly reflected this trait from their first meeting of faun in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to the final departure from Aslan in *The Last Battle*.

Apart from these child portrayals, other prominent archetypal figures are witch and villain. Perhaps, as the storyline runs as good versus evil, both the series have towering influential villainous figures. Undoubtedly, every great fantasy story must have its one

supreme villain, who is dedicated to the hero's death and destruction of the good forces. In accordance with this Connie Neal aptly spells out in *Wizards, Wardrobes and Wookies*:

The villain serves the dramatic role of a worthy opponent who challenges the hero team, creates ongoing conflict and requires the heroes to fight back, thus bringing out the best in them. Villains are unrelenting; therefore, the villain and forces of evil must be recognized and vanquished if the hero is to fulfil his or her quest. (122)

In the series, the author has drawn excellent villains. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S.Lewis employed several villains in the entire series to accomplish his plot structure of virtue triumphs over vice. The most notable malicious mind is the White Witch – formerly known as Jadis, Queen of Charn, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, who enslaves Narnia in perpetual winter and turns her foes into stone. In *The Silver Chair*, Lady of the Green Kirtle holds the wicked position, who murdered Prince Rilian's mother, kidnapped and enslaved him. In *Prince Caspian*, King Miraz usurped the throne by killing his own brother King Caspian IX and *The Last Battle* presents a villainous team. Hence, the writer uses these archetypal types in the character depiction of cruelty.

Among these malevolent minds, White Witch garnered much attention from the readers. The cumulative weight of this archetypal model gains more prominence when the story unfolds. As Aslan warned in *The Magician's Nephew*, "Narnia is established. We must next take thought for keeping it safe. ... the world is not five hours old and an evil has already entered it." (143). Her tyrannical appearance registered firmly in the reading young minds, when Lucy reports in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, "She calls herself the Queen of Narnia though she has no right to be queen at all. ... And she drives about on a sledge, drawn by a reindeer, with her wand in her hand and a crown on her head." (37-38)

C.S.Lewis himself offers clue regarding his portrayal of witch as an archetype. In a letter to Professor William L.Kinter, he wrote: "The witch is of course Circe, ... because she is ... the same archetype we find in so many fairy tales. No good asking where any individual author got *that*. We are born knowing the Witch, aren't we?" (9). Certainly, while tracking this archetype in the fairy tales, the inventory starts from Circe, who by her magical drink transformed human beings into animals, witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, the wicked witch of the west in *Wizard of Oz* and witch in *Rapunzel*. Thus, C.S.Lewis is accentuating the universal knowledge of such creatures who are evil beings beyond ordinary human experience and often featured as haters of children. This shared familiarity underscores the nature of this archetype. Rightly, Elizabeth Baird Hardy in *Milton, Spenser and The Chronicles of Narnia* compares: "Like Snow White's stepmother, Jadis is a powerful archetypal figure: beautiful, vain, cruel and powerful. Yet, many elements of her character cannot be attributed to Disney's artists or even to the Brothers Grimm and their predecessors." (20)



The White Witch obtains prominence along with the progress of the story and the early chapters in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* typically shown her as a literary archetype. Mrs. Beaver declaration about her, that “there isn’t a drop of real human blood in her.” (81), firmly asserts her evilness. And it aggravates while she tempts Edmund to fall into her evil trap. Since she is ill-tampered and has demonic attributes. *In a reader’s guide through the wardrobe:*

... the White Witch is a personification of the principle of evil in the universe. ... she is much more than simply an evil individual who possesses great power. She calls herself the Queen of Narnia, but her power extends far beyond that of a human queen. The most overt sign of her supernatural evil power is her transformation of living creatures into stone statues. (71)

The White witch is another manifestation of Queen Jadis of Charn and like Lewis’s other evil characters, she betrays herself through her speech. In *Magician’s Nephew*, the book which flashes back to the creation and fall of Narnia, Jadis reduces the world of Charn to ruins through her use of the „Deplorable Word“ in order to gain ascendancy over her sister. Since the mere utterance of that word destroys all living things, sparing only the person who speaks it, Jadis destroyed her own people: “What else were there for but to do my will?” (MN 61). This wicked thirst for power profoundly echoes the sibling rivalry, which she herself admits in *The Magician’s Nephew*:

It was my sister’s fault She drove me to it. May the curse of all the powers rest upon her for ever! At any moment I was ready to make peace – yes, and to spare her life too, if only she would yield me the throne. But she would not. Her pride has destroyed the whole world. (76)

The evil figures in *The Chronicle of Narnia* series are given a thorough and well-developed treatment that echoes Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The major villains in the entire series, both in appearance and in essence, resemble the primary antagonists created by Milton to provide struggles for their protagonists. And also parallels with the „shadow“ archetype which designates the negative or dark side of the human being - those grasping, mean, malicious, lustful or even devilish aspects of the individual.

Apart from these tyrannical minds, the association of good characters exemplifies the consistent use of images which C.S.Lewis employed to depict the elements for the moral lexicon. Regarding the writer’s delineation, Kath Filmer in “Images of Good and Evil in Narnian Chronicles” aptly avers:

He represents good, transposed to the new, animal/human world of Narnia. It upon earth, animals were placed under the dominion of humans, ... in Narnia humans are under the dominion of the Lion, and what rule they enjoy over the

Narnian populace of human and non-human characters is only imputed to them by Aslan. (150-51)

Along with the embodiment of good ideals, Aslan adroitly played the role of mentor. This shade of mentor is typically the wise old man or woman archetype who takes on the role of protector, guide, revealer, teacher, motivator and coach for the hero. In Narnia, Aslan is the primary mentor, although the children find other mentors when Aslan is not present such as Mr. and Mrs. Beaver in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Puddlegum, the Marsh-wiggle in *The Silver Chair* and Dr. Cornelius in *Prince Caspian*. According to Jung, „wise old man“ pattern symbolizes intelligence, knowledge and superior insight. Whereas Connie Neal in *Wizards, Wardrobes and Wookie* articulates:

The role of the mentor is to help the hero prepare for his battles and challenges, to overcome doubts and fears, provide motivation, insight and knowledge that will be needed to complete the hero's journey and defeat the evil foe. Mentors help heroes to figure out the meaning of what they're going through and keep them moving in the right direction while developing their skills. (68-69)

These mentors model the hero's aspirations. Perhaps they are former heroes who pass on their mantle of wisdom and knowledge to help ensnare the success of their cause. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, when Susan and Peter shared their worries regarding Lucy's reported experience in the wardrobe to old Professor Kirke, he acts as a mentor by encouraging them to open the possibility that Lucy might be telling the truth. His response parallels with Digory in *The Magician's Nephew*, because this old Professor had been the boy Digory and had gone to Narnia before them.

Additionally, the mentors are often used by the writers to introduce the character to the new world, and explain what is expected, what rules must be followed and how things are to proceed. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver instruct Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. In *Prince Caspian*, the old nurse and later Dr. Cornelius serve as initial mentors. However, in every Narnian story, the children encounter their greatest mentor, Aslan himself.

It is quite apparent that these archetypes, in the series, represent a direct line from man's archaic origins to the present moment, since it acts as psychic residue or the genetic capacity of the individual inherited from thousands of generations of survivors. The presence of archetypes in myth and folktales is a clue to the significance of the racial experience embodied in literature. Such archetypes depict the existential situations and problems man has faced and solved, and also where man has failed to resolve these crises. These models accentuate the need for man to draw lesson from his ageless experience. Hence the archetypes are positive powers and patterns or generative forms and functions with which



mankind is endowed by reason of the survival of the most creatively fit individuals and species. Even as instincts, archetypes are guides to survival. For this reason, the study of archetypes in Children's literature should not be considered a mere academic preoccupation but can be viewed as a vital part of man's education to the chances of survival.

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